

CAN WE AFFORD TO COMPROMISE THE QUALITY IN RESEARCH PAPER WRITING AND PUBLISHING?

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ABSTRACT

Publishing a scientific paper in an indexed journal or in a journal with high impact factor is not an easy task. There could be many obstacles which the researcher has to face to fulfil the standards and expectations of the publisher and peer reviewers. The writing and publishing may not be so difficult, if available guidelines, formats and tips are adequately followed. An efficient English writing skill may not guarantee publication of a poorly conceptualized research paper. Similarly a quality research work may fail to get through the rigorous reviewing process for publishing due to very poor skill of writing and presentation. It is implied that every review committee of a reputed journal has to take utmost care to review and certify a piece of work for publication. A scientific paper does not only contribute to existing knowledge base of any subject or domain, but more it has to drive the future research by providing insight and guidance to the scholars. Hence, ensuring the quality of a research paper and its publication seem to be more important than the quality of source, i.e. the thesis. Many research experts, academicians and scholars may differ in terms of their views or perceptions about the ‘standard or quality of a thesis’ and ‘quality of a research paper’. We may go on debating the issue in different academic events, but the time calls for our pragmatism and courage to restore, preserve and promote the scientific temper of research through the publication of research papers. The current paper is based on the observations through reading the research papers published in a few reputed journals. The names of the scholars and journals are not mentioned here to satisfy the ethical principles.

KEYWORDS: Research Paper, Scientific Paper, Article Writing, Paper Writing, Peer Review, Paper Publication, Editorial Board and Publication Criteria

INTRODUCTION

The reference cited by Derntl (2014) in his paper has rightly quoted that “a validly published scientific paper must contain the first disclosure of results with sufficient information to enable peers (*i*) to assess observations, (*ii*) to repeat experiments or process, and (*iii*) to evaluate intellectual processes.” Except some of the renowned and reputed publication agencies, most of the emerging journal publication agencies appear to be more commercial than promoting academic excellence. Most of the recent ‘paid publication’ agencies or journals have further spoiled the scenario. The frequency of publication of journals has increased from 2-4 issues in a year to 12 or more issues in a year. There are journals which promise to send ‘acceptance’ confirmation within 3-7 working days after receiving the paper online. Also it has been observed that there are journals which take only 3-4 days to complete the publication cycle, i.e. receiving, reviewing and publication. We cannot ignore the role of technology in accelerating the process of review, plagiarism check and publication process. However at any cost we cannot ignore the ‘rigorous peer review’ to ensure the standard or quality of a

paper and that definitely requires time and commitment from qualified and experienced academicians and expert researchers. To adequately satisfy the three points, as mentioned in the beginning of this paragraph (*ibid*), we need to ensure that the scientific principles of a research study has been followed and justified in the paper under consideration for publication. We shall not compromise with the quality of a research paper, otherwise that may undermine the value of its source, i.e. the research thesis or report. A quality research has to adhere to the universally acclaimed or accepted scientific process that includes the background justification of a study; its objectives or research questions; hypothesis (if any); study design; measurement of outcomes; findings and discussions; and protection against systematic bias, non-systematic bias, and inferential error (Boaz & Ashby, 2003; Lohr, 2004; Shavelson & Towne, 2002). Neither the writer(s) of a paper, nor the reviewers can ignore their intellectual and moral obligations towards holding and promoting the value and quality of research and research publications.

Every research paper is expected to contribute to the knowledge base of a particular discipline or domain. Hence, the strength of a paper is likely to be judged by a group of peer reviewers in terms of its potential to build knowledge through the defined process of inquiry, evidences and logical discussion. The process of inquiry, especially the research method is one of the most important determinants of the authenticity of the findings and thereby the confidence implied in a research study or paper. The other important aspects of a research paper could be its capacity to provide a glimpse to the audience about conceptualization of research problem; scope of research through identifying research gaps in the earlier studies; (statistical) analysis, findings and discussions etc. Unless the entire content of a research paper and its logical sequence are clearly presented, it cannot be recognized and appreciated as a paper written for others. According to Booth et al. (1995), 'writing for others is more demanding than writing for oneself.' It is beyond doubt that a research paper is published to communicate certain authentic scientific information to a community to promote scientific thinking and lead progressive development of knowledge in a domain. Many scholars (Peat et al., 2002; Stock, 2000; O'Connor, 1995) have strongly argued in favour of a paper's role in that direction. Thus, the scope of a research paper extends beyond mandatory requirements to satisfy criteria for academic recruitments, awards or increments and promotions.

The objective of this paper is not to provide detail guidelines to scholars / researchers about how to write and publish a research paper. Also it is not intended either to critically evaluate the roles of publishers, especially the editor(s) and editorial board, or to provide guidelines to them. The purpose here is to understand the serious lacks in the published papers, especially the methodology part, so that we can sensitize the journal publishers towards ensuring a better future for research and research based publications. The readers, if interested, may refer Michael Derntl's (2014) article on 'basics of research paper writing and publishing' (see list of reference) for detail guidelines about structure, writing and publishing of scientific papers.

METHODS

The nature of the study involved here does not qualify it either as a qualitative study or an evaluation research. Also it's not appropriate to term it as a descriptive research. There have been some scientific principles followed to collect necessary data from the secondary sources. However the current piece of work would better be considered as an article, but not typically as research paper. For the purpose of collecting data, first the authors identified fifteen volumes of nine different management journals (offline editions) available on the library racks of the institute during 6th July to 8th August, 2015. Then after thorough study of all the research papers, authors identified 14 papers with serious flaws in their methodology part. All 14 papers have been selected purposively for writing this article. Name of the journals and authors

are kept confidential to satisfy the ethical principles. The selected research papers have been categorized under the following three broad areas.

- General Management: 03 papers.
- Human Resource Management and Organizational Behaviour: 08 papers.
- Marketing and Retail Management: 03 papers.

DISCUSSIONS

The discussion on each selected paper will start with the mention of title of the paper, followed by objectives / hypotheses and observations on methodology. Each selected paper will be presented as ‘case’ and will be serially presented with numbers from 1 to 14.

General Management

Case-1

Title: The effects of organizational reputation on organizational attractiveness.

Objectives

No specific research objectives have been formulated. Only the scholars mention that the study aims to examine the impact of organizational reputation on the attractiveness of students to organizations. Also, the study explores gender differences among the respondents in perceived importance of the factors of organizational reputation.

Observations

It appears to be an empirical and descriptive research, but there is no specific mention about the methodology used in the study. The scholars have ‘randomly’ selected 20 colleges from Coimbatore, which are offering MBA course. Such a selection technique cannot build enough confidence to satisfy the requirements of an empirical study. The area of study needs to be appropriately defined to execute sampling process. It is mandatory to mention whether Coimbatore city or Coimbatore Zone (as per administrative definition of Anna University, Chennai) or Coimbatore administrative district (as per Govt. of Tamil Nadu) or any other suitable jurisdiction was used to define the field of research. Needless to mention here that the number of colleges will vary according to the area covered under ‘Coimbatore’. According to Anna University, Chennai, there are 67 colleges in Coimbatore Zone which are affiliated to the university. In addition to Anna University affiliated colleges, there are colleges under Bharathiar University, Coimbatore, which too offer MBA course. Hence, it is expected that the sampled institutions need to be selected through certain criteria to make it a more representative study. Again, there is no mention about how the samples were selected from the 20 sampled institutions and how its size comes out to be 335 (N). Since, the study has an additional aim to explore ‘gender differences’, it is expected from the scholars to define about how they have ensured adequate participation of students from all gender groups. Unfortunately, such narration is not given anywhere in the paper.

From the ‘analysis and results’, it is understood that the scholars have included three hypotheses for testing. But, the statements of hypotheses are not mentioned in the paper. Those are just referred as ‘Hypotheses 1, 2 and 3’ in the discussion part.

Case-2

Title: Risk assessment for managing risk in infrastructure projects.

Objectives

No specific ‘research objectives’ are mentioned separately in the paper. It has been understood from reading of the text that the study has been conducted to identify the risk factors of two different construction projects and their assessment.

Observations

The theoretical frame work of the study and the reviewed facts through literature survey clearly identify that ‘brainstorming’ and ‘interviews’ are the most preferred methods for conducting such risk assessment study. However, it is not yet justified in the paper about why the scholar has chosen ‘questionnaire method’. In the 100 sampled respondents, the scholar has included the contractors, clients, project managers, consultants and many others. Every stakeholder group may have its own perceptions and views about probable risk factors and hardly there is any evidence that the views of different stakeholders will be similar. It would have been fair, if the scholar had given due attention to different stakeholders and accordingly categorized them to draw samples. Without any accepted definition and categorization of the accessible population, the scholar has just sent questionnaires to 100 respondents including all the different types of stakeholders. Such a sample may lack a fair representation of the underlying population. Further, there is no mention about the distribution of different stakeholders in 100. Neither there is any mention about the research method used nor has the scholar defined the sampling technique. It appears to be as purposive or convenient sample. In any research it is necessary to check the error (precision) and the confidence with the sample size.

One more important observation is that the researcher includes two different projects, i.e. one thermal power and one hydel power project, in the study. The ‘results and findings’ section reveals that it has been a comparative study of risk factors between two different types of power projects. Neither the nature of the study is reflected through the title of the paper nor has the methodology narrated it. Also, there is no mention about how many participants from each of the two projects represent in 100 selected respondents.

The tool (questionnaire) used in the survey was developed by the scholar with 25 statements. There is no mention about its reliability test and pilot testing before its final use. Further, the scholar states that the response rate has been low because the ‘authorities’ have been busy with solving land acquisition problems at the respective project sites. Out of 100 participants, 30 responded and returned the filled-in questionnaire. Since the limitations were already known to the researcher, the field work plan could have been altered to ensure better participation and response rate.

Case-3

Title: The influence of assets and capital turnover on earnings per share in the commercial banks in the kingdom of Bahrain.

Objectives

Based on the nature of research problem or expectation of the sponsor of the study, the researcher can very well decide to include either a set of objectives or research questions to determine the execution plan. The paper under review has included two research questions under the heading – ‘objectives’. According to scientific principles of research every

'term' used, has its own scope and limitations. A set of research questions may however lead a researcher to formulate certain measurable objectives and/or hypotheses. But there is no known theoretical foundation which may contextually equate objectives with research questions. The researcher has mentioned the following two questions under the heading-'Objectives of the research'.

- What is the relationship between financial performance and the earnings per share in the National Bank of Kuwait?
- What is the philosophical framework for the concepts of financial analysis and earnings per share?

Observations

In fulfilling the above two objectives (?), the researcher has formulated two hypotheses, namely 'first hypothesis' and 'second hypothesis', which are as follow.

- **First Hypothesis:** There are no statistically significant differences between the rates of asset turnover and earnings per share for the National Bank of Bahrain (2010-2013).
- **Second Hypothesis:** There are no statistically significant differences between the rates of capital turnover and earnings per share for the National Bank of Bahrain (2010-2013).

While 'Bank of Kuwait' is mentioned in the objectives, the hypotheses mention 'Bank of Bahrain'. May be it's an editing error, but no mention of prefix 'null' with 'hypothesis' here is a gross technical error.

The paper neither includes 'methodology of the study' nor writes about it in the text. It means a research paper is accepted for publication, which does not mention about 'methodology'. From the analysis section it has been understood that the study has used T-test for hypotheses testing. But there is no mention about sample size and sampling technique used in the study.

Be it a research report or research based paper, the contents are to be arranged and sequenced in an order. According to all standard books on research methodology, the theoretical descriptions must appear before 'review of literature' and 'methodology'. However, the paper presents the conceptual and theoretical narrations on financial analysis after 'hypothesis' section. Such a sequence is hardly appreciated as a standard process.

Human Resource Management and Organizational Behaviour

Case: 4

Title: The recruitment process across seven firms in the Indian banking sector

Objectives

The following are included as objectives in the research paper.

- To identify the ways the recruitment process differs at various levels.
- To highlight the key factors that need careful attention during recruitment by senior staff and HR personnel.
- To guard against the pitfalls that organizations may incur.
- To emphasize the importance and best recruitment practices that may be followed.

Observations

The first two ‘objectives’ are appropriate for a research study but the last two objectives are meant for taking certain actions based on research outcomes. If it was an experimental or action research, the fourth objective could be acceptable.

The scholars have selected four private sector banks, two nationalized banks and one foreign bank. Neither the method of selection of the banks nor the justification of selecting different types of banks has been mentioned. It is understood from the narration that primarily a ‘focus group’ discussion (FGD) was planned by the scholars. But they abandoned the idea of FGD by citing an irrational logic. They mentioned that the participants were not comfortable to talk in any open group. There is no mention in the paper about what they want to mean by ‘open group’. Do they mean an open group by inviting participants from different banks or an open group with different categories of participants from the same bank? It is quite natural that different banks or a group of banks may have their own independent and unique recruitment policies, which the officials may not prefer to discuss in any open group. Citing such a reason as limitation may be referred as a deceptive attempt.

The data were collected from seven personnel managers through in-depth interviews. There is no mention about the profile, including job description, of the selected seven participants. It is not mentioned, whether those selected participants have been solely responsible for the recruitment process for different level of employees. Also, there is no mention about how those participants have been selected from the seven banks. Unless such profile is made clear, it remains doubtful about the quality and level of their contribution to any such in-depth interview process.

Another major flaw, as observed, is about lack of clarity in defining the ‘levels of employment’ in the banks. To satisfy the first research objective it was essential to provide operational definitions of ‘three levels of recruitment’. In certain selected banks the authors have mentioned about ‘entry level’, ‘junior level’ and ‘middle level’ and in other banks they have mentioned about ‘executive’, ‘non-executive’ and ‘probationary’. Also, it is understood from the narrations that except one participant all others have thrown light about the recruitment process of either one or two levels of employees. Such a description neither satisfies the standards of a qualitative study nor provides adequate confidence in understanding the comparative status of recruitment process at different levels of a particular bank or banks.

Case: 5

Title: Employee engagement in retail industry: An empirical study.

Objectives

The following are included as objectives in the research study.

- To study the factors responsible for employee engagement.
- To find the relationships between various employee engagement factors.
- To determine the most influencing factors on employee engagement which helps for better employee engagement implementation.

Observations

The paper was published in an international journal from India. The first major drawback as has been identified is

the logical sequence of content. The ‘literature review’ appears after ‘objectives’ and ‘method’. The scholars have narrated their study as an empirical research but the context and process do not sufficiently satisfy the method. As mentioned in the paper, 100 participants have been selected randomly from ‘various retail industries’. It could have been acceptable; if the statement was written as ‘100 participants were selected purposively or conveniently’. How does a random process of selection can end up with 100? The used approach or technique of selection best fits into ‘convenient’ sampling, but not random sampling. The terms ‘various retail industries’ are vague and do not provide any clarity to identify the exact field of study and the size of accessible population.

The term employee engagement has been equaled to employee satisfaction, and then a satisfaction survey has been designed to fulfill research objectives on ‘employee engagement’. The scholars prepared their own survey tool (questionnaire) but there is no mention about the test of validity and reliability of that tool in the paper. An obsession for statistical analyses has been marked in the paper without a sound methodological plan. Neither the content nor the context of the study adequately satisfies the attributes of an empirical study.

Case: 6

Title: Theoretical perspective for the diffusion of high performance work systems (HPWS).

Objectives

No specific objective(s) has(ve) been mentioned in the paper. However in ‘abstract’ the scholar has written “the paper will examine what factors prevent the diffusion of the HPWS using several organizational theories”. Prior to that, the scholar has raised one question which appears as “why don’t organizations change even when confronted with fairly convincing evidence concerning the efficacy of HPWS?” It is understood from the text that the scholar plans to ‘examine’ the factors to respond that question.

Observations

A repeated reading of the text leads to an understanding that within the given context it can be accepted as a theoretical review, but not otherwise as research paper. Hence, the attempt of the scholar to ‘examine’ the factors that preventing diffusion of HPWS, through literature review, sounds weak and unreliable either to follow or use the findings in real life decision making. A theory is a set of systematically interrelated concepts, definitions and propositions that are advanced to explain and predict phenomena (facts) (Cooper and Schindler, 2007, p.47). In general theories are meant to explain and predict what goes on around us. Further, it depends on soundness of theories and their fitness to certain situations (under observation or study) that determine the degree of accuracy of our predictions and perceptions (*ibid*). The paper reveals that the scholar has reviewed literature sourced from different countries or geographical areas, such as Korea, Japan, USA etc., and developed seven ‘propositions’. Unless a proposition is formulated in to ‘hypothesis’ for empirical testing, it cannot be taken as a premise, either to draw research conclusions or formulate directive ‘suggestions’ for any organization or industry. Even such propositions which are based on factors reviewed through literature from different countries (i.e. different situations or contexts), cannot be used confidently to predict the phenomena of any other country or situation.

The approach of the study and its presentation seem to be misleading for both, the readers and potential researchers.

Case: 7

Title: Profiling of organizational culture using OCTAPACE framework in Indian insurance industry.

Objectives

The scholar has formulated five objectives, including one which is ‘to offer some valuable and practicable suggestions and result oriented guidelines to the selected organizations for improvement of their OCTAPACE culture’. Generally it is known that the scientific purpose of any academic and/or fundamental research is not primarily to give suggestions to improve situations, but to understand and define a phenomenon. Suggestions may or may not follow the findings and conclusion.

Also it has been observed that there are two objectives which are meant for (i) measuring values and beliefs and (ii) comparing various values and beliefs of the selected organizations. But from the analysis, it is depicted that it has been an examination and measurement of eight value dimensions and there is no substantial independent content for measurement of ‘beliefs’. It seems to be very important for a researcher to be more rational while framing ‘research objectives’ and writing content of report.

Observations

While OCTAPACE framework is all about eight values, the conclusion of the study makes a statement on organizational culture which includes values, ethos and beliefs. Without having any operational definition about the construct ‘culture’, the discretionary use of such words or constructs may be misleading and confusing for the readers and future researchers. While the ‘introduction’ part in the paper predominantly writes about ‘organization culture and climate’ without any single reference to ‘OCTAPACE’ in the text, the ‘review of literature’ is entirely about OCTAPACE values and OCTAPACE culture. The style of writing indicates that the scholar has equated values with culture. However, from the available literature on ‘OCTAPACE’, it is understood that this framework defines and examines an organization culture with reference to a set of eight values. Conceptually values, ethos, beliefs, virtues etc are interrelated but independent to each other. The writing of research report, especially a research paper may not be similar to writing stories or essays.

Under ‘methodology’ the scholar only writes about instrument, variables, analytical techniques and sample size. There is no mention either about research method or sampling technique and procedure. Also, there is no mention about the size of accessible population.

The results have been presented with an obsessive dominance of statistical analysis with hardly any space for ‘discussions’. It’s doubtful how a reader will understand the profile of organizational culture of the selected organizations from the obsessive presentation of statistical data. The outcome of any scientific research may be appreciated and accepted, provided the research framework, especially the methodology part, is adequately and rightly defined. Many a times the researchers become more obsessive to ‘statistical part’ and so they knowingly or unknowingly ignore the importance of ‘research method’.

Case: 8

Title: Impact of organizational justice on employees’ workplace and personal outcomes: A study of Indian insurance sector.

Objectives

The scholars have not yet formulated any research objectives and they have directly ‘proposed’ three statements as hypotheses for testing. The following are the propositions included in the study.

H1: Distributive justice will be a stronger predictor of workforce and personal outcome.

H2: Procedural justice will be a stronger predictor of workplace and personal outcomes.

H3: Interactional justice will be a stronger predictor of workplace and personal outcomes.

Observations

The title of the paper is very broad in terms of its scope for research. While it is observed that only ‘managers’ from some private and public sector insurance companies from Haryana, Delhi and NCR region have been included in the study, there has been no justification to include very broad terms like ‘employees’ and ‘Indian insurance sector’ in the title. It is always expected that the title of any research study, including a research paper must be indicative to understand what exactly has been studied. The following title could have been a better alternative.

“Impact of organizational justice on managers’ perception about workplace and personal outcomes: A study in selected insurance companies”.

In the backdrop of formulating ‘propositions’, the scholars have cited very minimal theoretical and empirical evidences, most of which do not directly establish any relationship between organizational justice (OJ) and ‘workplace / personal outcomes’. Rather those evidences narrate possible associations between OJ and other variables, such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment and employee motivation. The statements proposed as hypotheses appear to be more conclusive and deductive in nature. Instead the researchers could have given enough evidences (through review of literature) to make arguments or assumptions and then, they could have formulated statements with probable relationships for further testing. The word ‘will’ in hypotheses probably needs to be replaced with ‘may’.

The ‘methodology’ part narrates only the sample size and measurement scales. There is no mention about how many private and public sector insurance companies are present in the selected study areas and how many of them have been selected for the study. Also, it does not mention about the accessible population size. It has not yet mentioned about the research method used in the study. The text reveals that 202 samples have been selected for analysis, but there is no mention about any sampling technique in the paper. Generally the return rate of filled-in questionnaire is around 35-40%, but the scholars present that all 202 sampled-respondents returned the questionnaires with all adequate and complete responses. It’s a questionable claim and it lacks authenticity.

Case: 9

Title: Work-life balance and job satisfaction among school teachers: A study.

Objectives

The scholars have framed the following objectives in the research paper.

- To study the impact of demographic variables (age, qualifications and experience) of school teachers on their job satisfaction.

- To study the impact of WLB on job satisfaction of school teachers.

To fulfill the above two objectives, the following four null-hypotheses have been formulated for testing.

H₀₁ : There is no significant difference between age and job satisfaction of school teachers.

H₀₂ : There is no significant difference between experience and job satisfaction of school teachers.

H₀₃ : There is no significant difference between qualification and job satisfaction of school teachers.

H₀₄: There is no significant impact of WLB on job satisfaction.

Observations

A title speaks about the content and essence of a research paper. Hence coining or framing the title is equally important as writing a paper. Placing the words ‘A study’ at the end does not show any special significance. Also it does not attach any additional value if placed as prefix. The remaining words in the title imply that the focus of the study is on WLB and then its contribution to job satisfaction. But the content of the paper is predominantly on ‘job satisfaction’ with limited references related to the fourth hypothesis. The major content of literature review includes 14 references which describe only about job satisfaction and its association or relationships with demographic and other factors which do not include anything related to WLB. Later part of the review deals with only 04 research references relating to WLB and its association with job satisfaction and the review reveals that all four studies confirm a positive and direct relation between WLB and job satisfaction. At the end of the review, the scholars claim that the research studies in WLB are very few in number and so more such studies are required. Such a claim may be referred as baseless and unethical when it is well known that hundreds of similar research studies have already been conducted in the domain, both in India and outside. A Google search with key words like ‘researches on work life balance’ and ‘researches on work life balance and job satisfaction’ produce respectively 13,40,000 and 67,10,000 search results (Accessed on 9-8-2015 at 3.45pm).

Further, the first statement in the methodology section contradicts the actual plan as implied in the title and objectives. It reads ‘the present study tries to examine the impact of job satisfaction of school teachers’. However, the stated ‘objectives’ aim to study the impact of demographic variables and WLB on job satisfaction. The scholars have neither narrated about what type of schools and how many of them have been selected nor have defined the accessible population. Such an explanation is solicited from the scholars when they mention that the samples are drawn from ‘various school teachers of Hyderabad’. Also the construct ‘WLB facilities’ has been thoroughly used in the content of the paper, but there is no operational definition given on that.

Case: 10

Title: How managers’ emotional intelligence impacts employees’ satisfaction and commitment: A structural equation model

Objectives

Understanding the objectives has been very difficult from the text of paper. From the text, the following statements are identified which directly or indirectly narrate the objectives. The statements are presented here as they appear in the paper.

- Study seeks to better understand to what degree a manager or supervisor might influence workers’ toward higher

levels of satisfaction and commitment in the workplace.

- Study seeks to discover what leader behaviors are most beneficial toward achieving a more positive and productive work environment.
- To understand the correlation between leader behaviors and worker outcomes of satisfaction and commitment.
- Objective of the study is to explain the significant positive correlation between a leader's EI and levels of worker satisfaction and commitment in organizations.
- Objective of the study is to utilize SEM to create a model or set of models which aids in understanding the manner in which these factors interact to achieve worker satisfaction and commitment.

In addition to the above objectives, the scholar has also included certain 'exploratory' questions in the study.

Observations

The title lacks determination and focus to adequately describe the content of the paper. study. Is it a study to check the efficacy of structural equation model (SEM) or a study to understand the impact of managers' emotional intelligence (EI) on employees' job satisfaction and commitment through SEM? The title cannot answer any of these two questions. Also, the word 'influence' may be a better substitute to 'impact'. It is understood from the reading of the text that it has been a study to understand the influence of managers' and supervisors' EI on the job satisfaction and commitment of other employees. The study does not yet mention any operational definition of 'managers' or 'leaders' and so it's not clear if 'supervisors' are also included in it.

The narration in abstract presents it as an 'exploratory' study and later the inclusion of certain 'exploratory' questions further indicate the probable method. The statements of objectives, however present different views. While the first statement indicates it as a descriptive study, the second one indicates an 'exploratory' study and the third and fourth statements respectively indicate it as 'explanatory' and 'experimental' studies. Conceptually, similar researches may involve a combination of more than one or two research methods but it is essential to define the adopted research method or combination of methods in the 'methodology' section. It is quite unusual to note that the scholar has not yet defined or mentioned the 'method(s)' used in the study. The entire 'methodology' is devoted to narrate about the 'tool', i.e. the questionnaire. Nowhere in the paper yet the scholar has mentioned about what type of organizations have been covered or how many of them have been included and how those organizations are selected. There is no mention about the accessible population and also the scholar has not yet described about how 600 respondents have been selected.

Case: 11

Title: Work-life conflict among IT professionals.

Objectives

The study objectives are not transparently written. The 'abstract' mentions that the study "examines the sources of conflict from work responsibilities across demographic characteristics and also analyzes the impact of work-life imbalance on organizational commitment for employees of IT and ITES industry". At the end of the 'review of literature', the scholar writes that 'the present study also focuses on examination of gender neutrality in work-life conflict'. The statements are ambiguous and they do not communicate clearly the main purpose of the study. Later, in the entire text of the paper, there

is no specific mention about 'study objectives'.

Observations

The content in the title does not help in identifying the main issue of the paper. It does not accurately indicate about the research problem. It is merely a subjective statement which either may be termed as a problem of IT professionals in general or as a 'construct'. Further, it is very generic and does not help in identifying any specific researchable variable.

The 'review of literature' has not yet included any concluding paragraph either to highlight gaps in earlier researches or to identify the scope for the study. The entire review appears to be assimilation and arrangement of references from earlier research works and discussion that continues without any defined direction. It's an aimless writing without any conclusion at the end. With such a text in the backdrop, is it possible to write the methodology of any scientific study? Further it has been observed that the 'methodology' is not preceded by 'objectives' and/or 'hypotheses' or 'research questions'. Such a sequence of contents may not be attractive to the readers.

What is the research method used in the study? The answer has yet been found in the text. The procedure of selecting sampled organizations from *Pune* and *Bangaluru* is not narrated. The scholar has included 275 sampled respondents. How they have been selected? What kind of sampling technique has been used? There is no narration given in the paper.

It has been observed that the following three statements are mentioned as 'hypotheses' in the 'methodology' section. The third one is a null-hypothesis and it may be included in the study. But the first two hypotheses appear more as conclusive/ deductive statements without any sufficient supporting evidences through review of literature. Also, the inclusion of the word 'imbalance' in the third hypothesis does not make any sense. In research we must avoid to use such words/terms in the text, especially in the technical statements. Even if we want to do it, we need to provide 'operational' definitions of the terms in the methodology section.

H₁: Work-life conflict is similar among demographic characteristics.

H₂: Factors identified for work-life conflict significantly explain the imbalance.

H₃: There is no relationship between work-life imbalance and organizational commitment.

Marketing and Retail Management

Case: 12

Title: The influence of demographic variables on purchase behavior of luxury brands.

Objectives

The following have been included as study objectives in the paper.

- To understand the perception of people about what is a luxury product, and awareness of luxury brands and whether they buy luxury brands or not.
- To analyze the influence of demographic variables like income, gender, age etc., on the frequency of buying luxury products.

- To analyze the influence of demographic variables on the influence to buy luxury products.
- To analyze the influence of demographic variables on the intention to purchase the same brand they have previously purchased.

Observations

It appears to be a descriptive research, but there is no mention about the method used in the study. The scholars have not yet defined the sampling method. They have just mentioned that '139 respondents were taken from Mumbai'. Such a statement is not only inadequate but sufficiently misleading for any kind of scientific research. The population may be of any size and cover any geographical area but an accessible size of population must be defined before deciding sampling plan (Krishnaswamy, Sivakumar and Mathirajan, 2008:281). It is noted that the 'simple random sampling' technique has been used to draw 139 respondents from an undefined population. How does the sample size come out to be just 139? Either there is some sort of biasness involved in the sample or the scholars have purposively decided the number. An empirical study of this nature definitely requires a larger representative sample to satisfy the inclusion of a wide range of demographic variables, such as both genders, age group of 25-50 years, different educational backgrounds, occupations, income groups, marital status and religion.

From further reading of the paper, it has been revealed that the words 'products' and 'brands' are used as synonymous and no operational definition is given on that. While all the (null) hypotheses use the word 'brand' for the purpose of measurement, the research objectives use the word 'product'. For a layman it may not have any significance but in the contemporary advanced research in marketing / advertising such terms have unique meaning and scope. The scope of the research has been further diluted when scholars have failed to focus on any particular category (or categories) of product / brand. The over ambitious inclusion of all types of products/brands, such as apparel, mobile phones, watches, bags, shoes, pens etc., may not lead us to any kind of generalization or concrete conclusion. Such a wider inclusion may create ambiguity and may divert the focus of any similar type of study.

Case: 13

Title: T-Market Vs E-Market: A study of consumer behaviour while purchasing consumer durable goods.

Objectives

The following four objectives have been included in the paper.

- To find the distribution of consumers while purchasing consumer durable goods at the traditional market in contrast to the online market.
- To analyze the consumer behaviour while purchasing consumer durable goods in the traditional market.
- To investigate the consumers' preferences of one market over the other.
- To suggest some techniques for the online marketers to make it popular among the consumers.

Observations

The title indicates it as a comparative study but the content reveals that it has been conducted on the consumers of traditional market and there has been no participation of consumers of e-market. The paper clearly projects the biased

motive of the authors to identify why consumers are reluctant to purchase online and then to suggest online marketers to chalk out strategy to tap them. In case it was a sponsored study by any corporate company, the scope for criticism could have been limited. But it appears to be a doctoral research and so the paper deserves a thorough review of its procedural and methodological fitness.

To fulfil the research objectives, the scholars have formulated one ‘null hypothesis’, which reads as “consumers still prefer traditional market over online market in the era of electronic revolution”. The statement neither presents any negative relationship nor depicts any tentative relationship by chance. Even the statement does not qualify to be accepted as an alternate hypothesis. It appears to be a conclusive statement. Also it is surprising to note that there is no substantial evidence revealed through literature review, which may provide a lead to frame such a statement.

In the statement of problem, the scholars have referred ‘buying online’ as a ‘burning and contemporary issue which needs to be explored through research’. However in the methodology section, the scholars have lost confidence and tried to justify their methodology as a combination of quantitative, qualitative, evaluative, explanatory, descriptive and survey methods. The adopted approach lacks scientific temper and appears to be a ‘laissez-faire’ process to satisfy the vested purposes. Neither the target population is defined nor the sampling method. As has been understood from the paper, scholars have distributed the consumers in to two categories. In one category, they kept 500 participants and conducted a survey. In other category, they kept 200 participants (as interviewees) and conducted in-depth interviews. What has been the basis for such categorization? Why two different sets of participants have been chosen? No explanation is given in the paper. The number of participants has been decided either ‘purposively’ or as per the convenience of the scholars. There is no justification cited in the paper about why 200 participants are required to conduct case study. It appears to be irrational, overambitious and undesirable. Sometimes using multi-methods may be useful but using two different sources of primary data does not fit in to the context of the study undertaken. The entire process of sampling violates the scientific principles of research.

Case: 14

Title: Social marketing-awareness and satisfaction levels of government aided health insurance project in rural Tamil Nadu

Objectives

No specific research objective(s) has (ve) been mentioned in the paper. While writing the research gap, the scholars have just mentioned that their study ‘aims at focusing on the public-private partnership in health care with specific reference to the Tamil Nadu government’s Chief Minister’s Comprehensive Health Insurance Scheme in terms of awareness, impact and satisfaction through qualitative and quantitative research methodologies’. Either fully or partially, the ‘aim’ does not match with the title of the paper.

Observations

The scholars have rightly pointed out that there is hardly any adequate literature available on key issues being studied through their research. In such situations an exploratory research design is highly desirable. But in the paper, before writing the methodology part, the scholars declare it as an empirical research. The ‘aim’ of research mentions the use of two methods, such as qualitative and quantitative. Later, the scholars have referred those two (qualitative and quantitative) as tools, but not as ‘methods’. Again, before entering into methodology part, the scholars mention that ‘focus

group' and 'in-depth' interviews have been used for exploratory research, where quantitative tools are used to test hypotheses. The narration continues and again the scholars change their stand and mention 'focus group' as part of qualitative study. The three research parameters, namely awareness, satisfaction and impact have been identified as qualitative research variables. But, in the methodology section those three variables are referred as quantitative variables and studied through survey method. The given narration before methodology part and in the narration of methodology is contradictory and has been found to be an explanation without scientific temper and confidence.

The focus-group and in-depth interviews were conducted in a *taluka* of a district of Tamil Nadu, but there was no mention about what kind of tools had been used for that. One more observation here appears to be contradictory. Already in the review section the scholars have identified research gaps in three major areas, namely (i) status of awareness among the beneficiaries, (ii) level of satisfaction of the beneficiaries of the scheme and (iii) status of impact of the scheme. Later, in the methodology section, the scholars claim that those three potential research issues have been emerged from the focus-group discussion and in-depth interviews, and so they have included those three as research variables in quantitative analysis.

While defining the quantitative method, the scholars have rightly pointed out that such method requires a large number of respondents. But they have included only 90 respondents, out of which 50 are 'non-beneficiary respondents'. There is hardly any justification given about why non-beneficiary respondents have been included in the sample. Neither it is implied nor established about the inclusion of 'non-beneficiary respondents and their relevance in the study. Also, it is not clear why an undefined (and undisclosed) number of participants have been used for focus-group and in-depth interview, why 90 respondents (50 non-beneficiaries and 40 beneficiaries) are taken for measurement of awareness, and why only 40 beneficiary participants are used for measurement of satisfaction. From the above observations the following questions can be raised.

- What was the source of identifying the research variables, either 'review of literature' or 'respondents'?
- How it could be accepted as a quantitative study with 90 sampled respondents?
- Why 50 non-beneficiary respondents were included in the sample?
- Why different variables have been tested or measured with different set or number of respondents?
- Why the scholars have included others (doctors, hospital authorities, officials from the insurance company, government officials etc) in the in-depth interview?
- What kind of sampling method was followed to draw sample?
- How the sample size came out to be 90? What was the accessible population? What was the geographical area covered under the study?

Unless the above questions are solved with adequate and satisfactory explanation, the reliability and validity of the study and the findings cannot be appreciated or accepted.

CONCLUSIONS

The major motivation behind writing this article was not to ridicule the writing and publication efforts of scholars but to sensitize them, especially the publishers about the potential harms of compromising the quality or standards of research publications. A published research paper represents the evidences of some authentic information and data in a certain field of science including social and behavioural sciences. Hence review, critical observations and arguments on the ‘scientific processes’ of writing a research paper and its publication are very much essential for ensuring the future of research and its quality. We assume that the journal publishers too have an intellectual and moral responsibility to effectively institutionalize and execute the ‘peer- review’ process of submitted research papers/articles, so that those are fine tuned before final acceptance and publication. In all the 14 selected published research papers, it has been found that scholars have grossly compromised the ‘methodology of the study’ and the same has been approved and accepted by the journal publishers. Be it an ignorance or informed negligence, either on the part of the scholars or publishers, the trend or practice as a whole endangers the future of research and knowledge development. If the trend perpetuates in its overt or covert forms without adequate awareness and corrections then the entire domain of ‘research writing and publication’ will continue to suffer from ‘self-destructive’ syndrome. We leave it to the readers to think and respond to the title of this article and engage in constructive criticism to protect the future of research through scientific writing and credible publications.

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